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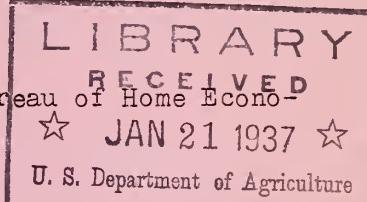
### HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, January 28, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "APRICOTS AND PRUNES." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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How many of my listeners have sighted the bottom of the last apple barrel by now? The apple crop was short this year in many places, both on the home trees and in the commercial orchards. Where a family used to depend on apples as the chief fruit for winter breakfasts and desserts, this year other fruits must supplement the apples.

However, as I see it, that's no cause for complaining. There's a record crop of grapefruit, plenty of oranges, canned peaches and pears, and several dried fruits to be had at any time from the nearest store -- especially the apricots and prunes.

There are so many good dessert possibilities in these last two that one can count on them for some weeks to come without making meals monotonous. And there is always the satisfactory knowledge that these two fruits supply excellent food values. Dried apricots, like other yellow-colored products, furnish vitamin A. Dried prunes are good sources of vitamin B, and both apricots and prunes are rich in iron.

It's necessary to put back into most dried fruits the moisture that was evaporated out, before they are used in cooking. But that's easily done, by simply putting them in water for a shorter or longer time. The food specialists of the Bureau of Home Economics have tested the cooking quality of most of them. They say that the variety of fruit makes a difference in the treatment. Even the season of the year makes a difference in the dryness of the fruit and consequently in the soaking time. Home-dried fruits may take longer to restore to moistness and tenderness than some brands of commercially dried fruits, treated by the latest methods.

Some varieties and brands of apricots and prunes can be eaten just as they are purchased, and some can be cooked without any soaking. If soaking is needed, put the dried fruit into hot water to speed up moisture absorption. Then cook it in the soaking water to save all the valuable food materials. Be sure to use any water or juice remaining after the fruit is stewed.

A pinch of salt helps to bring out flavor. Apricots need sugar, but do not add it until they are nearly done, or it will tend to darken the fruit and possibly make it scorch. Don't oversweeten apricots, or they will seem like a preserve. In our family we like a slice of lemon cooked with a pan of prunes, and water just to cover, so that the fruit will be well plumped out



and have plenty of juice. We don't usually sweeten our prunes, but some people do. Sometimes I spice them with a little cinnamon or nutmeg. Occasionally I cook equal amounts of apricots and prunes together, for a change.

Once stewed, both apricots and prunes are ready to appear several times, with a different look each time. First, they may come on the table just as they are, for breakfast or for dessert, with a liberal allowance of juice in each saucer.

Then, how about an apricot pie, or a prune pie? Thicken some of the juice with a little cornstarch so the pie will be easy to cut and serve. Apricot pie is generally made with an upper crust or a lattice top, but prune pie is simply thickened, flavored prune pulp put into a pre-baked pie shell. The pits are removed when the pulp is mashed up or put through a sieve. To make it very festive I sometimes add a top spread of whipped cream, or a meringue. I'm partial to apricot pie "a la mode", as they call it at the luncheonette counters -- accompanied by a dip of vanilla ice cream.

Both apricot pulp and prune pulp make delicious short-cake spreads. And in a very short time we'll be using more eggs in our menus and having some souffles and whips for dessert. The ingredients are the same for a souffle or a whip. The difference is only that the former is baked and the latter is made the last minute and served before it loses its fluffy texture. Both apricots and prunes have a sufficiently pronounced flavor to combine well with the blandness of the egg whites in souffles and whips. Be sure to cook a souffle very slowly for nearly an hour in a moderate oven (325 degrees) so the cells of the egg white will gradually set and the souffle will not fall.

Jellied prunes and jellied apricots, made by stiffening the juice with gelatin, are two more dessert suggestions. Apricot or prune charlotte is a deluxe gelatin dessert to be made when there's cream on hand. It's attractive molded in individual cups with lady fingers around the sides. The same mixture can be frozen as a mousse.

Apricot tapioca is an old-fashioned favorite, often served hot with hard sauce as well as cold with cream. And while we are still having cold weather you might try a hot steamed apricot pudding, or some hot prune gingerbread. When you are substituting a fruit salad for a dessert, don't overlook stuffed prunes and apricots. The stuffing is generally cottage cheese or cream cheese.

I can't resist giving you just one recipe today -- apricot stuffing for roast fresh ham. This stuffing would be good for veal or cured ham.

Here's the recipe: Select one pound of large plump dried apricots. Wash and drain, but do not cook them. Cut them into narrow strips with a pair of scissors. Melt 4 tablespoons of butter in a skillet. Add one-half cup each of finely chopped celery and parsley, and one-quarter cup of onion, also finely chopped. Mix with 4 cups of fine dry bread crumbs, 1 and 1/2 teaspoons of salt, and then add the apricots. Stir until well mixed and hot. The bread crumbs should be stale, but not dry enough to grate or grind.

